

# Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

*Working to Make Bicycling a Part of Daily Life in Portland*

1001 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 1300  
Portland OR 97204



Date: September 11, 2024

To: Portland City Council, Michael Jordan, Priya Dhanapal,  
Sonia Schmanski, Millicent Williams, Adena Long

From: Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

Re: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project Concerns

In 2021, the City of Portland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees (BAC/PAC) submitted a letter in response to the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). That letter made four main points:

1. There was much both committees supported about the project.
2. To achieve city, county and regional safety and greenhouse gas emission goals, active transportation and transit must be prioritized in space allocation on the bridge.
3. For network connectivity, **the project needed to ensure easily accessible connections to the pedestrian and bicycle network at each end of the bridge, including ramps to the Eastbank Esplanade**, for people of all abilities.
4. Provisions for pedestrian and bicycle access during construction with thoughtful detours that are “short, direct and of as high a quality as possible.”

The Bicycle Advisory Committee remains supportive of a Burnside bridge that includes ramps to the Eastbank Esplanade. We very much appreciate the efforts to prioritize space for people walking and riding bicycles on the bridge itself. At the same time, we know bridges only get replaced every one hundred years and we urge the City of Portland to demand the County remain visionary in searching for practical, modal shift, and climate focused solutions in the design phase. We request that the City of Portland insist the County consider the following:

- Include the westbound bus lane at the time of construction. There is no better time to respond to the climate crisis with improved transit and it will only become more difficult to implement in the future.
- NACTO notes 10-foot travel lanes are appropriate in urban areas and have positive impacts for safety without impacting operations. Repurpose the additional foot of space to expand space for active transportation to 18 feet.
- Ensure connections to active transportation networks at the bridge ends. The BAC strongly supports and recommends a simple ramp to the Eastbank Esplanade along the I-5 where a 340' long path connects to the existing staircase attached to the bridge. Work with people with disabilities to understand potential impacts to this community from not having access to the Eastbank Esplanade from the bridge if a ramp will not be built. **Investing in longstanding landmark infrastructure that fails to connect to our premier inner east car-free connector is unacceptable.**
- The protected bike lanes approaching the bascule section appear to be well designed. We are interested in the protection in the bascule section and would like more details, especially if it will look like the Morrison Bridge.

- Collaborate with Union Pacific Railroad, Oregon Department of Transportation and Portland Parks and Recreation to identify a solution for creating a path between Stark and Water and preserving a car-free Eastside connection during construction.
- Implement multiple detours, especially in Union Pacific Railroad and Oregon Department of Transportation right of way, to maximize connectivity and minimize out of direction travel and other impacts while the Eastbank Esplanade is closed for a lengthy 18 to 24 months due to construction. Consider implementing all four alternatives or at least Steel Bridge lower deck and Hawthorne at minimum. Find ways to reduce the bicycle level of stress.

The recent recommendation/selection of a bridge that is \$45 million more than other proposed designs is disrespectful of the community's popular choice and the public process. The County's choice of the more expensive design without connections to the Esplanade is fueling the fire of distrust in government.

It is incomprehensible that Multnomah County may choose to build a bridge that costs an extra \$45 million while also claiming they do not have adequate resources for important multimodal connections.

We are very thankful to city staff for continuing to engage with us on this project and for taking strides to incorporate our feedback. We ask the Portland City Council to push back on the County. We also ask the City Council to work with Metro, the State of Oregon, and our Congressional delegation to ensure adequate connections to the new bridge are part of the plan. **The BAC will not support any Burnside Bridge design that does not include ramps to the Eastbank Esplanade.** We ask the City Council to do the same.

Sincerely,



Jim Middaugh, Chairperson  
Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee



Joseph Perez, Vice-Chairperson  
Portland Bicycle Advisory Committee

March 17, 2021 letter:

<https://www.portland.gov/transportation/bicycle-committee/documents/joint-bac-pac-letter-commenting-eqrbb-deis-final/download>